TOMBSTONE PARK MOOSE

STRATIFICATION SUVEY

MARCH 2000

Yukon
Environment

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Copies available from:
Yukon Department of Environment
Fish and Wildlife Branch, V-5A
Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6
Phone (867) 667-5721, Fax (867) 393-6263
E-mail: environmentyukon@gov.yk.ca

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March 2000 Tombstone Park Survey

We surveyed of Tombstone Park on March 7 and 8, 2000. Surveys focused on moose and sheep distribution, abundance and habitat distribution but observations on other wildlife and human activity were also recorded. The surveys were flown using a Cessna 185 with a pilot and three observers. We used approximately 12 hours to complete the surveys.

We would like to thank Torrie Hunter and Dan Reynolds for assisting with the surveys. We especially appreciated Dan's willingness to share his extensive knowledge of the area and relied heavily on his input during the survey. His knowledge of the area and wildlife represents an extremely valuable resource that should be solicited in the development of park management plans.

Based on Dan's long term knowledge of the area, snow accumulation in during the 1999/2000 winter was substantially deeper than normal. Wildlife distribution was affected and will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

We surveyed all areas of potential late winter moose habitat. We counted a total of 62 moose in the park and about 9 moose immediately adjacent to the park. Specific observation locations are given on the attached map. As a general overview, late winter moose habitat appears quite limited in the park. With the exception of southeastern and southwestern corners of the park, where relatively extensive stands open spruce/willow forests occur, late winter moose habitat is essentially limited to narrow bands of willows along river and creek drainages up to approximately 4000 feet ASL. The heaviest concentrations of moose and moose sign were observed associated with open spruce/willow forests along the Chandindu, Tombstone and Little Twelve Mile rivers in the southwest corner of the park. Other, individual or small groups of moose or moose sign were noted associated with willow patches throughout the park. Dan indicated that there is another important moose wintering area just west of the park in the headwaters of the Chandindu River. We did not investigate the area.

We also sent approximately three hours assessing and documenting sheep winter range in the park. As previously mentioned, based on Dan Reynolds' long term knowledge of the area, deep snow accumulation resulted in abnormal distribution of sheep during March, 2000. We documented traditional sheep wintering areas identified by Dan as well as all sheep and sheep sign sightings during the survey.

Dan pointed out a key sheep wintering area around Chert Mountain, just northeast of the confluence of the Chandindu and little Twelve Mile rivers. He indicated that there were only about 12 sheep on it this year where there is normally about 30 sheep. Deep snow was the reason of the lower numbers. He noted that ridge to the east of Chert Mountain is also sometimes used as winter range. We saw sheep tracks on the ridge northwest of Mount Jeckell but Dan indicated that this area is not normally used as sheep winter range.

Dan also identified the ridge just south of the west end of Seela Pass as an important sheep wintering area. We saw at least six sheep in the area. Five sheep were seen on the ridge above the confluence of Seela Creek and Blackstone River. More tracks were noted on the ridges to the south. Eight sheep were seen on the ridge northeast of Prune Mountain.

The ridges around Blackstone Mountain are usually key range with at least 30 sheep wintering there. We saw 3 sheep and tracks. Sheep are also usually scattered along wind-blown ridges just west of Blackstone River and south of Auston Pass.

Sheep winter range was identified along the ridges west of Mount Boyle and Incline Mountain, in North Fork Pass directly across from the Hart River Road. Dan noted that reckless use of snowmobiles in the valley between these mountain ridges could be detrimental to wintering sheep. While he feels that some people will need to continue to have snowmobile access to the area for legitimate purposes, he believes that some form of management of snowmobile activity in the area should be considered to ensure that local sheep populations are protected. We saw 6 sheep on the ridges around Whitecrown and Cathedral Mountains.

The ridges north and south of Yakama Creek appear to be important winter ranges. We saw 28 sheep and extensive tracking on the ridge to the north. One sheep and tracking was also seen on the ridge to the south.

Dan also pointed out a traditional sheep mineral lick at the base of a bluff on the north side of Little Twelve Mile River approximately 2.5 kilometers from its mouth. He said he was not sure that it was still used because a large landslide across the valley may have resulted in the river changing course and flooding the lick out. Another mineral lick was identified on the west side of the upper Blackstone River near the mouth of Hammer Creek.

Other sheep sightings and identified winter ranges are recorded in a digital and spatial database.

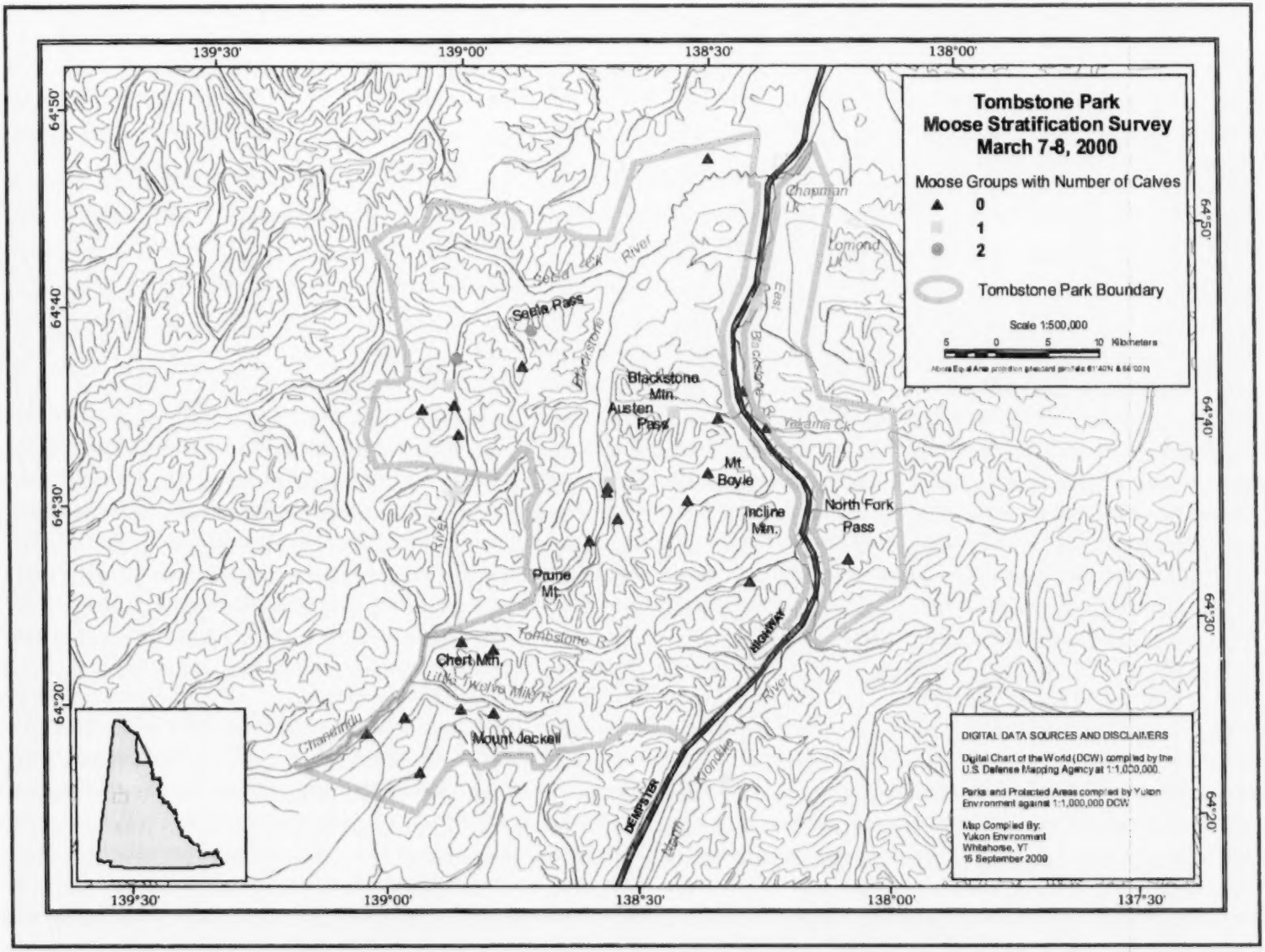
In addition to moose and sheep we recorded other wildlife observed during the survey. About eight caribou were seen along the ridge north of Yakama Creek on the east side of the park. No other caribou or caribou sign were sign during the surveys. Dan Reynolds said that a herd of 50-60 caribou generally winters in a patch of spruce just west of Chapman Lake but had moved elsewhere this winter because of the deep snow accumulation. These animals move west to summer in OA 1. He indicated that these were large bodied animals and not part of the Porcupine Herd.

A wolverine was seen in a patch of spruce trees just west of Chapman Lake and tracks were noted throughout the park.

Pine martin tracks were seen in several areas in the park.

We saw a pair of gyrfalcons in the headwaters of the Blackstone River near Seela Pass and a single gyr on the south side of Seela Pass. The lone Golden Eagle was also noted in the headwaters of the Blackstone. Ptarmigan were abundant throughout the Park.

Extensive snowmobile activity was recorded on both side of the Dempster Highway around North Fork Pass. Dan Reynolds again noted that he believes that careless use of snowmobiles along the East Blackstone River Valley, south of Mount Boyle, could be detrimental to sheep wintering in the area. He feels that some form of access management, recognizing legitimate needs to access the area, should be considered. Snowmobile tracks were also noted along the Chandindu River up to about the park boundary.


Tombstone Park
Moose Stratification Survey
March 7-8, 2000
Moose Groups with Number of Calves
0
1
2
Tombstone Park Boundary
Scale 1:500,000
5 0 5 10 Kilometers
Albers Equal Area projection standard parallels 61°40'N & 64°00'N
DIGITAL DATA SOURCES AND DISCLAIMERS
Digital Chart of the World (DCW) compiled by the U.S. Defense Mapping Agency at 1:1,000,000.
Parks and Protected Areas compiled by Yukon Environment against 1:1,000,000 DCW.
Map Compiled By:
Yukon Environment
Whitehorse, YT
15 September 2000
139°30'
139°00'
138°30'
138°00'
137°30'
64°50'
64°40'
64°30'
64°20'
Sebia Pass
Blackstone Mtn.
Austen Pass
Mt. Boyle
Incline Mtn.
North Fork Pass
Prune Mt.
Chert Mtn.
Mount Jackell
Tombstone R.
Little Twelve Mile R.
Chapman Lk.
Lomond Lk.
Yukon River
Klondike Highway
DEMPSTER